

~~TOP SECRET SENSITIVE~~

EYES ONLY

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TOP SECRET SENSITIVE 230925Z JAN 71 VI CAS CHANNELS

FROM: AMBASSADOR BUNKER, SAIGON 650

TO: THE WHITE HOUSE, EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY HENRY A. KISSINGER

SUBJECT: SCENARIO FOR LAOS OPERATIONS

1. PRESIDENT THIEU HAS EXPRESSED TO ME HIS CONCERN ABOUT THE NEED TO DEVELOP A SCENARIO FOR THE FORTHCOMING OPERATIONS IN LAOS, SCHEDULED TO START FEBRUARY 5. SINCE PREPARATIONS FOR THE OPERATION HAVE ALREADY BEGUN, HE FEELS THE MATTER HAS BECOME URGENT. THE AIRBORNE DIVISION AND TWO-THIRDS OF THE MARINE DIVISION HAVE BEEN WITHDRAWN FROM THE LINE FOR A REST PERIOD. THE PRETEXT FOR THEIR WITHDRAWAL IS POSSIBLE ENEMY ACTION AGAINST THE SAIGON AREA DURING THE TET HOLIDAY PERIOD.

2. THIEU SAID THAT WHEN THE MOVEMENT NORTH OF THIS LARGE NUMBER OF TROOPS BEGINS, THE PRESS WILL ANTICIPATE SOMETHING AFOOT, AND WE WILL HAVE TO DEVISE SOME DIVERSIONARY SCENARIO FOR THIS MOVEMENT. WE SHALL ALSO HAVE TO CREATE SOME OPERATIONAL DIVERSION ONE OR TWO DAYS BEFORE THE LAOTIAN EXERCISE BEGINS. WITH ALL THIS ACTIVITY HE FEELS THAT NEITHER WE NOR THE GVN CAN REMAIN SILENT.

3. HE ASKED WHAT OUR THOUGHTS WERE FOR HANDLING THE LAOS SITUATION AND ASKED WHETHER WE HAD TALKED WITH SOUVANNA. IF, FOR EXAMPLE, THE PRESS "SMELLS" SOMETHING BEFORE THE OPERATION BEGINS AND QUERIED SOUVANNA AS TO HIS ATTITUDE REGARDING ARVN OPERATIONS IN SOUTH LAOS AND HIS REPLY WAS NEGATIVE, WHERE WOULD THAT LEAVE US, ESPECIALLY THE GVN WHOSE TROOPS WOULD BE ABOUT TO MOVE OR EVEN ON THE GROUND? HOW WOULD WE RESPOND TO A NEGATIVE REACTION BY SOUVANNA AFTER THE OPERATION WAS UNDERWAY?

4. AS IS HIS CUSTOM AT TET, THIEU IS SPENDING THE NEXT FOUR DAYS IN THE FIELD WITH HIS TROOPS, RETURNING TO SAIGON LATE AFTERNOON OF THE 26TH. HE ASKED TO SEE ME THEN, HOPING I CAN GIVE HIM AN INDICATION OF THE KIND OF SCENARIO WE ARE THINKING ABOUT. SINCE IF ARVN IS TO MEET PRESENTLY PROPOSED SCHEDULE, TROOP MOVEMENT WILL HAVE TO BEGIN IMMEDIATELY AFTER TET I WOULD APPRECIATE IT IF YOU COULD LET ME HAVE INFORMATION BY THAT TIME.

5. WARMEST REGARDS.

ON-FILE NSC RELEASE
INSTRUCTIONS APPLY

State Dept. review completed.

AC HPBUQY

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